

## **Town Center Area CID LCI 5-Year Plan Update**

### **Evaluation and Appraisal Report** *(See Attached Report of Accomplishments Table)*

Since 2004, the Town Center Area Community Improvement District (TCA CID) has made significant progress toward implementing the Town Center SuPurb LCI Plan.

#### *Transportation Initiatives:*

Three major transportation projects that will increase mobility and improve the pedestrian environment in the area are underway.

- All 3 phases of the Big Shanty Road project, which will provide a new context sensitive alternate to Chastain Road connecting Chastain Road to Bells Ferry Road. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2009.
- All phases of the Noonday Creek Trail, a major accomplishment of the cooperative efforts of the TCA CID and Cobb County. This was a key component of the LCI Plan, which will create a needed east-west connection for pedestrians and cyclists and a desired natural amenity for the Town Center area to attract development and create identity.



*Construction of the Noonday Creek Trail off road and parallel to road*

- The TCA CID Beautification Program. This program will implement all streetscape and gateway projects prescribed in the SuPurb 5-Year Action Plan as well as others throughout the entire TCA CID area. Engineering and design is complete and construction will begin in 2009. The TCA CID has also invested in clear and consistent wayfinding signage throughout the CID, which will also be implemented this year. This will have an impressive impact on both pedestrian mobility and identity of the Town Center Area.



*Planned streetscape improvements on Barrett Parkway*

Additionally, the TCA CID is working on three other key transportation projects in the SuPurb LCI Plan and has made notable progress toward accomplishing them in the near future.

- The Big Shanty Connector project, which will provide a vital connection between Town Center Mall and the new Big Shanty Road linking two key redevelopment areas in the SuPurb Plan, the Town Center Mall area and the Hidden Forest Subdivision area. The TCA CID has started engineering for this project and prequalified the project for LCI Transportation funds.
- The George Busbee Parkway Bicycle Lane project, which will provide a north-south bicycle connection for the SuPurb LCI area between Barrett Parkway and Frey Road, was also recently submitted for prequalification for LCI Transportation funding. This project will link the Noonday Creek Trail to the rest of the SuPurb LCI area including Kennesaw State University.
- The transit component of the SuPurb LCI is also being successfully pursued. Since the LCI in 2004, the Town Center CID has continued to operate their holiday shuttle program from the Monday after Thanksgiving to December 22 each year, and is pursuing potential partnerships with Kennesaw State University, Cobb County, and Cobb Community Transit to implement a permanent shuttle for the Town Center Area.



Only minor transportation items from the original 5-Year Action Plan have not yet been started. These are all traffic operation items including upgrading traffic controllers, retiming signals, or installing fiber communication. These items have been delayed awaiting the next Cobb County SPLOST.

#### *Housing and Other Local Initiatives:*

The TCA CID has been extremely successful in completing all of its other local initiatives. Most of these initiatives are ongoing partnerships and marketing strategies that have been continually implemented positioning the TCA CID to strategically influence future development in the area. Key accomplishments include:

- Design Guidelines, which were adopted by Cobb County in 2006. This design guidebook incorporates the SuPurb LCI study recommendations for urban design and public space standards including guidelines for site design, streetscapes, intersections, access management, street furniture and wayfinding. These guidelines accomplished many of the specific goals outlined in the LCI including requiring consistent streetscapes with continuous sidewalks along all roadways; adoption of access management principles including interparcel connectivity; encouraging active uses at ground level with large amounts of fenestration; designing parking to be concealed from main streets; and restricting block sizes to a maximum of 600 feet to encourage pedestrian activity and discourage super-block development. The guidelines are used by Cobb County to evaluate proposed development and redevelopment in the entire Town Center Area to ensure future development meets the vision of the SuPurb Plan.
- Supplemental LCI Study in 2005, which analyzed existing land use and zoning conditions, and documented case studies from around the county offering potential strategies for implementing the key development areas of the LCI master plan. This study made specific rezoning recommendations for each of the development areas defined in the plan that would make the build-out of the SuPurb Plan possible. The key recommendation was for Cobb County to create a separate zoning district for the Town Center Area with a sub-area for each of the three activity centers defined in the LCI. Recommendations outlined building heights, mix of uses, and parking

and site planning requirements for each of the three subareas laying the groundwork for the development of a future ordinance.

- Partnership with GRTA to assemble land for BRT station, which was accomplished in 2008.
- Partnership with developers of Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment to assemble parcels and rezone the single family subdivision to a *Planned Village Community*. This rezoning, which was granted by Cobb County in 2007, allows development of the new modified grid network of streets and mixed-use, multifamily village envisioned for this key project of the SuPurb LCI Plan.
- Ongoing relationship with Town Center Mall and other property owners within the SuPurb area to facilitate assemblage of land, promote awareness of LCI Plan and policy changes, and communicate about potential redevelopment
- Annual participation in Kennesaw State University's transportation and master planning process to encourage expansion of campus uses into the SuPurb LCI area.
- Ongoing marketing initiatives to attract quality development including partnership with Cobb Chamber of Commerce, participation in LCI Development Fair, annual prospect package of the SuPurb LCI's target markets, and annual production of collateral specification sheets for undeveloped and redevelopable property within the SuPurb LCI area.

The regulatory action items from the original 5-Year Action Plan all prescribe rezoning of specific areas for the purpose of allowing a mix of uses and higher densities in specific areas within the SuPurb LCI area. It is the policy of the County not to rezone specific parcels based on speculative development unless the rezoning is initiated by the property owner, however Cobb County has been very cooperative and supportive of rezoning initiated by property owners that is in synch with the vision of the SuPurb LCI Plan. A successful example of this process is illustrated by the rezoning of the Hidden Forest area, in which the developer of the proposed new mixed-use development known as the Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment applied for and was awarded a rezoning of the property to *Planned Village Community* (PVC). In light of this preferred process, the status of the remaining regulatory action items in the original 5-Year Action Plan has been reported as no longer relevant.

#### *Progress on the Three Key Development Focus Areas:*

- The Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment project has made great progress and will most likely be the first of the three key development projects in the SuPurb LCI Plan to be built. Developers have secured the right to purchase all the necessary property and have rezoned the property to *Planned Village Community* (PVC). A master plan for the development that reflects the intention of the concept plan in the LCI study has already gone through the DRI process. The project is currently on hold due to market conditions. Despite this delay, this is a very good sign for the emerging vision of the SuPurb LCI area. This project is surpassing the original goal of bringing a significant and diverse supply of residential to the area by incorporating supportive retail, office and open space to make it a truly mixed-use development. The plan for this project was the first to be scored by the Livable Communities Coalition Smart Growth Scorecard Project and was recommended for approval as a smart growth project. Once built, this project will be a regional example of smart growth and a catalyst for the redevelopment of the rest of the Town Center SuPurb LCI area as the mixed-use, multi-modal, lively center it was envisioned to be in 2004.





*LCI Concept Plan for Town Center Village*



*Current Master Plan for Hidden Forest Redevelopment*

- The southern component of the “Town Center Village” concept plan is the creation of a mixed-use district around existing Town Center Mall. The centerpiece of the mall area redevelopment is a wide central green lined with restaurants, outdoor dining and storefront retail forming an urban main street, or gateway, that links the mall ring road to the north entrance to the mall building. Town Center Mall is still a successful, regional retail center, and mall owner, Simon, has recently invested in a complete interior remodel, so future redevelopment is still a viable plan. As stated in the LCI, the key component necessary for the success of this plan is a connection over Noonday Creek connecting the Hidden Forest area to the mall. The Big Shanty Connector project currently waiting for funding will provide this connection; therefore, the mall redevelopment will most likely be delayed until other physical improvements are made including the completion of the Noonday Creek Trail and Big Shanty Connector.
- GRTA has assembled the land required for the proposed BRT station development, which has been delayed due to a recent decision by GDOT not to fund the BRT. The new plan is build a multi-modal facility at this location and use the assembled land as an additional park and ride lot until HOV lanes serving the facility are constructed in 2010.

### *New Developments:*

- Kennesaw State University has acquired and rezoned the land north of the Hidden Forest Subdivision and planned BRT station, where KSU plans to build a campus soccer stadium and multiple recreational fields. While meeting the goal of expanding campus uses into the SuPurb LCI area, this project impacts the original framework plan slightly because it occupies some of the land that was intended for additional residential development north of Big Shanty Road. However the LCI concept plan for the “Town Center Village” calls for a total of +/-2,450 residential units, with 600 or more units to be located on the new town green envisioned for Town Center Mall, and the planned Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment will have 1,700 residential units. As a result, the KSU property won’t be necessary to meet the goal of establishing a significant residential base within the LCI area, which will now be accomplished with more compact development placing future residents that much closer to amenities like Town Center Mall, Noonday Creek, and the new KSU facility.
- Kennesaw State University, with assistance from the TCA CID, will also build a new road from Frey Road to Busbee Drive that will bridge over Chastain Road and provide a direct, multi-modal connection between the SuPurb LCI area and the KSU campus.
- TownPark Village, a mixed-use commercial node with townhomes and loft-style office over retail and restaurants, was recently completed just outside the SuPurb study area. This is the first example of commercial mixed-use development in the Town Center Area, which supports the LCI vision for commercial mixed-use along Chastain Road.



*Office Over Retail and Restaurants at TownPark*

**See Attached Development Inventory Table and for detailed information on development projects.**

While the TCA CID has been very successful in implementing partnerships and getting transportation projects started or completed, the land use component of the plan has not seen much progress. The Town Center Area has only had one project developed within the SuPurb LCI area since the 2004 LCI study. Despite TCA CID efforts to market the area to developers, there has not been interest to create denser or mixed-use projects like those envisioned and prescribed by the SuPurb LCI Plan. While the current stagnant market due to national recession can be blamed for the current lack of activity, this does not account for lack of development for the past five years.

The huge exception to this is the planned Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment project. Although this development is currently delayed due to market conditions, it is a sign of the high quality of redevelopment that the Town Center LCI area has the potential to attract. While this project is a successful example of private developer initiated rezoning, it was an easier target for developers because

the necessary parcels are part of one subdivision that collectively made it known through the LCI process that they wanted to sell, and the LCI plan illustrated a publicly supported vision of higher density residential in this area. Other areas of the plan require more effort on the part of private developers to assemble parcels and go through the rezoning process individually. Cobb County has been extremely supportive of the SuPurb LCI plan and has proven its commitment to implementing the plan by allowing rezoning for projects like Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment. However the need for individual developers to go through rezoning in order to create the type of development called for in the LCI plan can be a barrier in attracting development to implement land use policy.

Moving forward, the TCA CID and Cobb County have determined that the best strategy to overcome this barrier is to create an Overlay District Ordinance specifically written for the Town Center Area. One of the action items in the original 5-Year Action Plan was to participate on an Advisory Committee to review Cobb County's *Redevelopment Overlay District (ROD)* zoning to ensure the overlay coordinates with Town Center SuPurb development plans. However the County determined that this new ROD zoning was not appropriate for the Town Center Area because it is currently being applied only to areas that are in severe decline and have no redevelopment potential without the incentive of this designation. An alternate initiative, which has been added as a new item in the revised 5-Year Action Plan, is to create a new Town Center Area Overlay District Ordinance using the 2005 LCI Supplemental Study recommendations that would allow the building heights and mix of uses needed to develop the types of projects envisioned in the SuPurb LCI Plan with prescribed development regulations to ensure quality, desirable development.

### **Implementation Plan with updated 5-Year Action Plan**

The TCA CID will continue to be the guiding organization responsible for implementing the Town Center SuPurb LCI Plan. Over the last five years, The CID has established partnerships and marketing initiatives to fund public improvements and influence future development and transit in the Town Center Area. These partnerships have been carried forward into the new 5-Year Action Plan as the TCA CID plans to continue these efforts. Specific objectives include:

- Partner with Cobb County Community Development to create a Town Center Overlay District ordinance
- Continue to assist Cobb County Community Development in the review of proposed development within the TCA CID area by providing recommendations to ensure that development is compatible with the SuPurb Plan
- Collaborate with Cobb County Transportation to secure funding for remaining traffic transportation action items from the 5-Year Action Plan
- Partner with Cobb Rides, KSU, Cobb County and CCT to implement a permanent local shuttle
- Continue to work with GRTA on the future development of the multi-modal transit station and coordinate development of land surrounding the transit hub to be compatible with a future station
- Continue annual participation in Kennesaw State University's transportation and master planning process to encourage expansion of campus uses into the SuPurb LCI area
- Assist property owners within the SuPurb area and developers to facilitate assemblage of land for desirable development consistent with the LCI Plan

- Collaborate with Cobb Chamber of Commerce on marketing initiatives to attract quality development to the SuPurb area
- Create prospect package of the SuPurb LCI's target markets annually to attract development
- Produce collateral specification sheets for undeveloped and redevelopable property within the SuPurb LCI area annually to distribute to potential developers

#### *Prioritization of Transportation Improvement Projects*

TCA CID has successfully implemented many of the priority projects listed in the original LCI, most of which will be completed by the end of this year or next. Moving forward, the remaining transportation projects should be prioritized as listed below.

1. Big Shanty Connector Project connecting Town Center Mall to Big Shanty Road
2. George Busbee Parkway Bicycle Lane
3. All Traffic Operation Improvements
4. New road connecting Wilson Road and Town Center Drive

#### *Housing Strategies*

The Big Shanty Connector Project is of high priority in the next five years as it is the critical piece of implementing both components of the Town Center Village, The Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment Project and the Town Center Mall development. These two areas contain the core housing components critical to the SuPurb Plan in order to support proposed retail, provide significant housing opportunity in the area to better balance the large supply of jobs in this major employment center, and take advantage of the existing park and ride and future transit station. The TCA CID will continue to try to secure funding for the Big Shanty Connector project, which will connect these two developments to one another and the broader Town Center Area. As previously stated, the Big Shanty Connector project has already been prequalified for LCI Transportation funds.

#### *Necessary Regulatory Changes*

The SuPurb LCI Plan outlined the vision and future land uses for two key activity centers, the Town Center Residential Village and the Mixed-use Transit Station, as well as two Mixed-Use Commercial zones along Chastain Road and Barrett Parkway. The next step of implementing this vision is to create a favorable regulatory framework. The Town Center LCI Supplemental Study done in 2005 recommended that Cobb County create a separate overlay zoning district for the Town Center SuPurb area. This strategy is currently being used by other community improvement districts and metropolitan counties throughout the region including DeKalb and Gwinnett to implement LCI plans and allow quality mixed-use development within a defined boundary using without changing the underlying existing zoning of individual parcels. Over the next five years TCA CID will collaborate with Cobb County Community Development to draft this Town Center Overlay District to be adopted by 2014.

**See Attached 5-Year Action Plan (2009 – 2014) for detailed information on specific action items.**

### *Strategies to Ensure Continued Support of the Supurb LCI Plan*

The TCA CID board is comprised of local property owners and business leaders that are dedicated to implementing the SuPurb LCI Plan. Moving forward, the TCA CID will continue to form and maintain relationships with property owners within the CID area to promote awareness of the LCI Plan and policy changes, and communicate about potential redevelopment to ensure continued local support of the plan.

Additionally, a new TCA CID website is planned to launch in 2010, which will provide better access to information for citizens and potential developers. Updated information on the TCA market, potential development sites with contact information for property owners, current projects such as the successful rezoning of the Hidden Forest Subdivision Redevelopment, and contact information for people from the TCA CID and Cobb County Community Development that can assist with land assemblage and/or the rezoning process will be maintained and marketed to potential developers.

### *Evaluation and Feedback Process to Monitor Plan Implementation*

The TCA CID will continue to monitor plan implementation and evaluate the progress of the SuPurb by doing an assessment report and update to the action plan every five years with the next update scheduled for 2014. Cobb County will be involved in each update to help identify any necessary new action items or revise strategies for implementing remaining items.